

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

EDITOR : JOHN GARRETT · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU · GENEVA · SWITZERLAND
TEL. 36 71 30 · CABLES OIKOUMENE U.S. ENQUIRIES: WCC, 156 FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK 10 : TEL. WATKINS 4-8551

No. 48/26th Year

11th December, 1959.

On Other Pages

Methodists Ask US-China Trade Study	Page 2
Churches Study Afrikaner Family Life	Page 3
De Blank Hits Marriage Ban	Page 4
Korean Church Split Widens	Page 4
Dutch Archbishop Advocates Ecumenism	Page 5
Huxley's Views Debated	Page 5
In Brief	Page 6

Birth Control Issue in US News Spotlight

(New York) - The question of promotion of artificial birth control information in overpopulated countries continued last week to be a major news issue in the United States.

Dr. R. Norris Wilson, director of Church World Service, cooperative overseas relief agency of US Protestant and Orthodox Churches, has reported that the agency has been distributing birth-control information "for years" and that he would "feel disgraced" if a request for such information were rejected.

The CWS executive, in an interview reported in The New York Times, said that he saw nothing "immoral" in limiting the size of families by artificial birth prevention. "It is inconceivable," he observed, "that God likes to see children dying on the streets." He added that the US Government is not involved in any such programme, and that it was a "gross misfortune" that the issue has become involved in politics. "It is a moral, not a political problem," he commented.

Dr. Wilson made his remarks at about the same time as President Eisenhower was telling his weekly press conference that the United States would refuse to advise other nations on birth control as long as he was chief executive.

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian Movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items. EPS may be freely reproduced in any form with acknowledgment.

The president said he could not "imagine anything more emphatically a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility". He said that the question "has nothing to do with governmental contact with other governments" and "we do not intend to interfere with... the internal affairs of any government".

Meanwhile, two prominent Protestant leaders last week took issue with the statement of the Roman Catholic hierarchy opposing use for foreign aid funds for distribution of birth control data in overpopulated countries. (See EPS No. 47)

They were Protestant Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike, of San Francisco, head of the new Clergymen's Advisory Committee for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and Dr. John C. Bennett, dean of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Bishop Pike said the Catholic bishops' position would "condemn rapidly increasing millions of people in less fortunate parts of the world to starvation bondage, misery and despair".

"The great majority of the people in these countries are not Roman Catholic and should not be compelled to observe Catholic scruples against contraception", he said.

Dr. Bennett said it was "tragic" that Roman Catholic leaders are pressing "a point of view on birth control which has no sound moral or religious basis, and which has been rejected by most other Christian groups". He noted that most non-Catholics are convinced there is no valid moral distinction between "artificial" and "natural" contraceptive methods and urged that Roman Catholic leaders "focus their energies on making the rhythm method more reliable" instead of "minimizing the gravity of the population problem".

Also last week a leading Jesuit moralist said that it would "clearly be wrong" for a Roman Catholic president to approve a bill sponsoring promotion of birth control information.

The Rev. John R. Connery, professor of moral theology at West Baden College, Indiana, asserted it would be morally mandatory in all circumstances for a Catholic president to veto such a bill. He suggested that if a case arose in which a Roman Catholic president felt it was necessary to cooperate to some extent with such a programme "as a lesser of two evils", he could dissociate himself from the bill without vetoing it. Any bill not returned by the president to Congress within ten days of the time it is presented to him for his signature automatically becomes law. Father Connery made his statement in an article to be published in the December 12 issue of America, a national Catholic weekly.

A leading aspirant to the US presidency in the 1960 elections is a Roman Catholic senator John F. Kennedy, Democratic, of Massachusetts. Senator Kennedy has said that he feels it would be a mistake for the United States to advocate birth control in other countries, but that if such a bill came before him as president he would use his "personal judgement... as to what would be in the interest of the United States".

EPS, Geneva

Methodists Ask US-China Trade Study

(Chicago) - The Board of World Peace of the Methodist Church (US) has gone on record in favour of exploring the possibility of US trade with Communist China, banning nuclear tests and asking all governments to declare complete disarmament as their ultimate goal.

The board also called upon the church's General Conference to authorize a carefully selected commission of not more than 12 leaders "to study thoroughly the moral and theological problems involved in the reaction of Christians to new aspects of modern war".

The resolutions, among a number adopted at the board's annual meeting in Chicago, will be forwarded as memorials to the church's 1960 General Conference next April. Some highlights of the resolutions:

China: "Looking forward to the day when the People's Republic of China can take its proper place in the council of nations, we recommend that the United States use every possibility to seek a settlement... (including) the possibility of trade with Communist China under the same laws and regulations that govern US trade with the USSR and other Communist countries."

Disarmament: "...Christians can be satisfied with nothing less than general and complete disarmament."

Nuclear Warfare: "When Christians contemplate the consequences of modern war, whether launched by intention or accident, they are increasingly forced to the conclusion that here is the greatest social evil of all. No longer is there any hope that resort to war, even to resist aggression, can secure justice or preserve important values."

Population and World Peace: "We believe that planned parenthood, practised in Christian conscience, may fulfil rather than violate the will of God."

World Economic Development: "All nations in the UN should be challenged to give one per cent of their gross national product to underdeveloped nations. Aid should be allocated on the basis of need and ability to absorb capital rather than on the basis of political or social ideology." EPS, Geneva


Churches Study Afrikaner Family Life

(Johannesburg) - Approximately two-thirds of all Afrikaans-speaking families in the Union of South Africa are "favourably disposed toward religion and the Church", according to first results of a new study published in Johannesburg.

The study, based on interviews with 2,229 families from all parts of the country, shows 42 per cent lead "a devoted and exemplary life"; 22 per cent have "a favourable attitude towards religion"; 20 per cent are "fairly indifferent" and 16 per cent are "completely indifferent or hostile".

The inquiry over a seven year period is part of a study of Afrikaner family life described as "one of the most comprehensive social surveys" ever undertaken in the Union of South Africa. Eventually to be published in 12 volumes, the survey has been conducted by the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Other sections of the study reveal a decline of 62 per cent in one generation in the birth rate - the average number of children in families interviewed was 2.37 as compared with 6.19 in the families from which the parents themselves had come. The study attributed the decline to the fact that Afrikaans-speaking families are rapidly losing their pastoral background, while at the same time they are improving their social and economic position. It noted that the higher the income, the smaller the number of children and that the smallest number of children are born into families in which the father has a high professional status and the parents have reached a high standard of education.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

A third section on divorce reports that one out of every seven marriages ended in divorce between 1954 and 1956 as compared with one out of every thirty in between 1915 and 1917.

Future volumes will deal with neglected children, juvenile delinquency, unmarried mothers and working mothers. EPS, Geneva

De Blank Hits Marriage Ban

(Capetown) - Archbishop Joost de Blank of the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa, outspoken opponent of apartheid, said that the new mixed marriages law in South Africa makes it "an open question" whether or not Anglican priests will continue to serve as marriage officers for the state.

Calling the law "monstrous", the prelate declared: "When two sane, responsible Christians offer themselves to each other in the life-long bond of holy matrimony, it is near blasphemy to call such a relationship immoral if differences in skin pigmentation are involved. EPS, Geneva

Korean Church Split Widens

(Seoul) - A substantial minority group of the Presbyterian Church of Korea which walked out of sessions of its 44th General Assembly last September has held its own assembly and elected a moderator (see EPS Nos. 40, 47).

The dissident group is also reported to have seized control of the church's large seminary at Seoul and to have rejected a plan for reconciliation put forward by representatives of US and Australian Presbyterian Churches.

The new moderator of the group, which calls itself the National Association of Evangelicals, is the Rev. Yang Hwa Suk, the former vice-moderator of the Assembly before the split.

The rift stems from a dispute which developed in the church when the minority group opposed continued membership of the church in the World Council of Churches and attacked the use of the word "united" in the title of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. The US church supports the Korean church's work.

One of the compromise proposals rejected by the NAE suggested that the church sever all relations with the World Council for three years after which the matter would be put to a vote again by a re-constituted General Assembly.

The peace proposals were advanced by missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in the US (Southern), the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (Northern), and the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The seminary at Seoul, which with an enrolment of 500 students, is one of the largest in the world, lies on government property temporarily granted to the church when its buildings were destroyed in the war. Its seizure by the NAE took place when faculty and students were in the process of moving from the building to new facilities after officials had unsuccessfully tried to obtain permission to buy the property. Reports said the NAE group appeared and took physical possession of the school's furniture and records as well as the building. The original seminary group is meanwhile located at the Taikwang Academy, another Presbyterian institution in Seoul. EPS, Geneva

Dutch Archbishop Advocates Ecumenism

(Rotterdam) - Archbishop Bernard Jan Alfrinck of Utrecht, leading Roman Catholic prelate in the Netherlands, has spoken approvingly of "the richly blessed ecumenical trend" that is "drawing Rome and the Reformation closer together".

In an address to Roman Catholic women, reported in the Dutch Catholic "Volkskrant", the archbishop said there were "authentic Christian values" more carefully preserved in Reformed Christianity than in the Church of Rome. But the archbishop said that the Reformation churches had thrown out some things that turned out to be more "scriptural" than they had thought.

Hailing a better spirit of understanding, the Roman Catholic leader said: "Striving for unity means trying to get nearer to one another. You are not really striving for unity if you merely keep on asking the other party to cross over to your side".

According to the archbishop, Catholics of the last generation regarded the Bible as a Protestant book, but today Bible study is being strongly encouraged in the Catholic Church. Many Catholics, he noted, favour making the Eucharist more of a communal meal and like extemporary prayers more than set forms. He noted less stress on monastic life and compulsory confession and said even compulsory Sunday mass and devotions to Mary were the subject of critical discussion in some Catholic circles.

Archbishop Alfrinck emphasized the "ecumenical life does not mean that everyone will hold identical beliefs. Ecumenism is a search for truth", he declared, and "the common search for truth and the common recognition of truth bring unity".

Although he advocated an attempt to seek essential agreements and common "outward forms", the archbishop warned that the process would be "long and weary". He urged emphasizing agreements and then carrying on discussion about the remaining big differences in the resulting improved atmosphere. ERS, Geneva

Huxley's Views Debated

(Chicago) - Two prominent theologians - a Roman Catholic and a Protestant - have taken sharp issue with noted British biologist and professed atheist Sir Julian Huxley's contention that all religions are doomed and that science and religion are unalterably split.

They were the Rev. J. Franklin Ewing, S.J., professor of anthropology at Fordham University and Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, Lutheran professor of historical theology at the University of Chicago's Federated Theological Faculty. Both were speakers at an Institute on "Science and Theology" held as part of a convocation commemorating the 100th anniversary of Charles Darwin's "Origin of Species".

Father Ewing declared that any apparent warfare between science and religion is only the conflict of human beings who have had different experiences. "Truth perceived by science or philosophy is ultimately from God, Who is the author of all truth", he declared. "That God should contradict Himself is unthinkable".

Sir Julian had told the Institute that the "split between religion and science" could only be mended "through acceptance by science of the value of religion as an organ of evolving man, and acceptance by religion that religions do and must evolve".

He said man should stop worshipping "supernatural rulers" and should embrace an evolutionary religion rooted in modern scientific knowledge which would be able to "define our sense of right and wrong more clearly so as to provide a better moral support and focus the feeling of sacredness on fitter objects". He said this new religion would "sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature in art and love, in intellectual comprehension and aspiring adoration, and would emphasize the fuller realization of life's possibilities as a sacred trust".

In reply, Father Ewing declared that "God is the Creator of man, body and soul. Whether He used the method of evolution for the preparation of the human body or created it from unorganized matter is not of primary importance. In either case He is the creator".

In accepting evolution as a "valid scientific theory", Father Ewing said Catholic writers from the beginning have made it clear that a "true spiritualistic evolution - one which allowed of the human spirit and the fact of God the Creator - does not come into opposition with Catholic dogma".

Dr. Pelikan, in rebuttal of Dr. Huxley, noted that "the central meaning of the Biblical words for 'create' is divine activity, regardless of when the 'creating' is said to have taken place or how or from what previously existing materials, if any".

"Creation, therefore, is not principally an account of origins, but of dependence upon God," he said.

The Lutheran theologian observed that some doctrines have gone into hibernation and later were "radically reconceived and reinterpreted," adding that something similar may be happening to the Christian doctrine of creation at the present time.

"From quiet corners all over Christendom," he said "theologians are listening to scientists with seriousness and humility. He added that so deep is their devotion to the task that "they will not let theologians pose as scientists (or) scientists pose as theologians".

He observed that Sir Julian's grandfather, Thomas Huxley the biologist who supported Darwin's theory one hundred years ago, had said: "Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God." EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Representatives of five North American Lutheran churches have recommended publication of a six-volume Spanish edition of Martin Luther's works at a cost of about \$600,000. The action was taken at a meeting of the Department of Lutheran Cooperation in Latin America of the National Lutheran Council.

* *

Bishop Lajos Vetö, head of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, has recovered sufficiently from a recent heart attack to be able to resume his work at the beginning of 1960, according to a report of the Hungarian Church Press.

* *

The first of a four-part series by the British Broadcasting Corporation on the work of the World Council of Churches has received a review from Daily Express TV critic James Thomas. Thomas said the film based on refugee problems was "an exceptional contribution" and "created a disturbing emotional atmosphere aimed squarely at destroying the apathy with which 13 years after the war the wandering thousands are faced". Title of the series is "The Cry Goes Up...".

* *

Congregational Christian churches in Massachusetts (US) have sent an air-freight load of 44 purebred calves and turkeys to farmers in Teheran under auspices of Heifer Project, an inter-faith organization which helps replenish agricultural stocks in needy areas abroad.

* *

The five-member World Council of Churches delegation to churches in the USSR was met at the Moscow Airport by Metropolitan Nicolai, chairman, and by Archimandrite Nikodin, vice-chairman of the Council for Foreign Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. The delegation arrived in the Soviet capital Thursday, December 3, following a 42-hour delay in Prague because of fog (see EPS No. 46).

* *

The General Synod of the Netherlands Reformed Church has authorized continued discussions with representatives of the Gereformeerde Churches in the Netherlands, with a view to ultimate reunion. The Gereformeerde Churches broke away from the majority Reformed (Hervormde) Church during the nineteenth century. A joint commission has been meeting to strengthen understanding and fellowship between the two groups.

* *

Dr. W.F. Golterman, secretary of the Ecumenical Council in the Netherlands, has reported to the Council that there are now 10,000 Pentecostal Christians in the country in about 50 congregations. Dr. Golterman said the official churches are neglecting the doctrine of "the last things" and spiritual healing and need to give a more positive answer to the questions raised by Pentecostalism.

* *

Dr. Hendrikus Berkhof, former Dean of the Netherlands Reformed Theological Seminary at Driebergen, near Utrecht, and lecturer at the "Church and World" lay institute, has been appointed Professor of Dogmatics, Christian Ethics, Evangelism and Church Law in the University of Leyden. Professor Berkhof is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and an ecumenical leader in the Netherlands.

* *

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Negro integration leader, has announced he will move next February from Montgomery, Ala., to Atlanta, Ga., in the hope of expanding his fight for integration in the southern United States. Dr. King is the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. In Atlanta he will serve as co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church with his father. The position is expected to give him more time and a better location from which to direct the campaign of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which he heads.

EPS, Geneva

